

**TRANSFORMING THE DEFUNCT
TO DYNAMIC,
DELIGHTFUL,
DAZZLING**



Photo by Coco Mault (Creative Commons)

Minneapolis's Newest Addition
To Its Thriving Arts Scene

Blending Old and Historic Structures
with Fresh New Exciting Flair

ACOUSTICS, AUDIO, VIDEO DESIGN
COWLES CENTER



**ACOUSTIC
DISTINCTIONS**

DESIGN IN HARMONY



A determined collective effort to preserve the historic downtown Minneapolis landmark – the Shubert Theater - resulted in a 12-year, \$42 mil. project that transformed it to serve as the primary performance space for The Cowles Center.

Challenge 1: *Transform a defunct dilapidated historic structure into a vibrant, relevant venue that appeals to contemporary audiences*

In providing room acoustics, sound isolation, noise and vibration control, room shaping and layout, and A/V components, Acoustic Distinctions (AD) faced design challenges entailing a careful balance of several factors including:

- sensitivity to historic integrity yet convey a modern vibe
- the space's existing design strengths in respects to sightlines and acoustics
- updating performance and venue technology to support a variety of programs and the expectations of contemporary audiences
- integrating the desires of a diverse group of stakeholders representing venue management, local artists and esteemed community members



Defunct to Dazzling; The historic Shubert building was relocated two blocks away via rollers next to the existing Hennepin Center. A new glass atrium infill structure was constructed to link the two buildings and serves as the Center's gateway and entrance.

Before and after images of Shubert's transformation inside & out.
Above - exterior before and during the move;
Top - after exterior with modern infill building with modern flair;
Below - before and after interior.





SHAPING SPACE ACOUSTICS

"It is very rewarding to see how people react to a space that we've taken painstaking efforts to enhance the experience for both the audience and performer."

David Kahn, President Acoustic Distinctions and project's Principal Acoustician



Challenge 2: Address diverse and sometimes conflicting objectives to achieve a common vision

The project required strong collaboration among stakeholders and design team members, patience and creativity.

Acoustics needed to support a range of music and dance performance styles from tap to ballet, modern to ballroom, Indian to "The Nutcracker". Adjustable curtains provided one means to help control the acoustic environment appropriate for different performance types. In addition, the space needed to easily adapt to diverse genre types for shows scheduled every weekend from September through June.

Performance technology insights into audience expectations of being dazzled and sensitivity in keeping ticket prices affordable let AD help guide design choices to keep construction and equipment costs manageable. A modern lobby with digital AV components helps draw patrons, create energy and inform patrons of upcoming events in hip dynamic ways.

In the end, the team achieved an exceptional space that informs, enchants and engages audiences to keep them coming back.

The Rewards of Successful Collaboration

David Kahn, President of AD and Principal Acoustician for the project: *"It was great to experience the opening gala! It offered that satisfaction that comes from being part of a 12-year collective effort involving lots of stakeholders, various project champions and millions of dollars – it was like a family reunion."*

A Revitalized Legacy

As the home performance venue to multiple community dance companies, the revitalized Shubert offers stability and a greater chance of longevity for small local organizations.

The historic building adjacent to the Shubert, known as the Hennepin Center for the Arts, houses administrative offices, rehearsal halls, classrooms and studios of more than 20 local non-profit arts organizations. Together, as The Cowles, they serve to enrich the unique and vibrant arts scene of the Minneapolis / Twin Cities and have transformed into the performing dance mecca of Minneapolis.

Since its opening gala in September 2011, audiences continue to express delight over their experience of the Cowles Center.

This success anchors a performing arts landmark and builds on its legacy. Not only have audiences praised the venue for dance performances but also for chamber music.



Accolades

Audiences, Critics and Performers Embrace The New Cowles Center in Minneapolis.

The new Cowles Center fortifies the downtown arts scene of Minneapolis and endeavors to bring national prominence to the City's local dance talent. Social media posts on www.yelp.com after the premier included comments such as **"Hope they have concerts here too because the acoustics are excellent."** [Josh M.]

While the Center dedicates most of its programming to dance, it also offers occasional concerts and theatrical productions. The Center opened its season with a performance of the male vocal ensemble, Cantus -- the only non-dance organization slated for Cowles first season. The space acoustics supported a beautiful performance. As quoted in the Star Tribune review by William Randall Beard, the concert **"demonstrated that the space is also ideal for chamber music. Individual voices were separate and clear... blended into a strong, unified sound."** <http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/music/131876938.html>

Read more about the opening gala reviews by checking out these links:

<http://kstp.com/news/stories/s2277181.shtml?cat=1>

<http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/stageandarts/129426438.html>

<http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/music/131876938.html>

FOR DANCE & THE
PERFORMING ARTS

THE COWLES CENTER



ACOUSTIC DISTINCTIONS provided acoustic consulting and audio visual design for the Center.

Since its star-studded opening
on Friday, Sep. 9, 2011
celebrating the art of dance,
guest artist and audiences
continue to express delight
over their experience of the
Cowles Center.



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